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RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS 2199
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RUEHMN/AMEMBASSY MONTEVIDEO 4518
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SUBJECT: CHILE MEDIA REPORT - AUGUST 6

Lead Story

¶1. Bolivian President Evo Morales wrote a note apologizing for his criticism of right-wing presidential candidate Sebastian Pinera. The Foreign Ministry had issued on Tuesday a statement rejecting Morales' "intervention in Chile's internal affairs." Yesterday, after reading the apology, Foreign Minister Mariano Fernandez said Chile had "turned the page" on the incident (*El Mercurio*, conservative, influential newspaper-of-record, 8/6).

Bachelet-Uribe and U.S. military presence in Colombia

¶2. Foreign Minister Mariano Fernandez after the Bachelet-Uribe meeting: "The Presidents of Chile and Colombia . . . had an extensive exchange of opinions where President Uribe expressed Colombia's political decisions.... The President of Chile reiterated... that Chile respects the sovereignty, national interest, and political decisions of each and every country in the continent, and of Colombia in this particular case.... Different countries have different agreements with different countries on strategic and military issues. We cannot look at just one case. We must look at the group of countries and we are party to respecting all those agreements. We have different forums to discuss these things in a civilized and democratic manner. We have Unasur, the OAS, and the Rio Group.... This part is crucial, so thank you for the question. The President (Bachelet) said (in Brazil), if you read the transcript, what she essentially said is that Chile respects the sovereignty and national interests and the exercise of these (principles) for every country in the hemisphere. She then said that if there are countries interested in discussing these issues, they must do so in the right place, which is the next Unasur. Unasur has an agreement in its treaty whereby it can only express itself (on any matter) if there is consensus" (CNN, 8/5).

¶3. Headline: "Bachelet meets with Uribe and keeps her distance from Chavez' criticism of U.S. bases": Chile respects Colombia's decision with regard to U.S. military bases, said Foreign Minister Fernandez, but also left open the possibility for the issue to be discussed in the next Unasur meeting. Bogota was concerned that Chile, which is considered one of the most moderate countries in the region, would join Venezuela, Bolivia, and Ecuador in opposing U.S. bases in the continent. Questions about Chile's position appeared in a joint press conference in Brazil, where Lula da Silva said he did not like "the idea of another military base." Bachelet said she shared Lula's view and "the respect for the sovereignty and the national interest of all nations," adding that Chile "has never had a U.S. military base." The press interpreted this as an objection to the

military bases, but Foreign Minister Fernandez reiterated yesterday that this had been a misunderstanding. He said that Chile cannot view Bogota's decision as "either good or bad." In La Moneda it is no secret that Bachelet has always had questions about Washington's political and military intervention in Latin America. But she did not have much room to disagree with Colombia. Chile is one of the few South American countries that signed an FTA with the United States and although it has no foreign military bases, it receives considerable military cooperation from the Pentagon (La Tercera, conservative, independent, 8/5).

¶4. Headline: "Bachelet concerned with offensive against the United States and the OAS in Unasur": Bachelet has been a protagonist in the controversy with regard to Colombia's decision to allow U.S. military presence in Colombia. In Brazil she "agreed" with Lula da Silva's position of not wanting more American bases in the region. Colombia saw this as a sign that Chile and Brazil were joining Hugo Chavez in his offensive against the U.S. bases. But after meeting with Bachelet yesterday, Uribe was more at ease. Bachelet supported Colombia's decision and Foreign Minister Fernandez stated it: "Chile respects the sovereignty, national interests, and political decisions of all countries and Colombia's in this particular case." The GOC expects to find a strongly divided Unasur bloc in Quito, because although Uribe has the support of "Pacific Axis" countries, Bolivian President Evo Morales will ask Unasur to object to the presence of U.S. soldiers in South America. The GOC is concerned that with Rafael Correa in the presidency, Unasur will take a more confrontational stance (El Mercurio, conservative, newspaper-of-record, 8/6).

¶5. Headline "Chile underscores its respect for Colombia's Sovereignty": In her meeting with Uribe, President Bachelet expressed Chile's "total respect" for other country's decisions, and the Colombian president explained his counter-terrorist and narcotics policies and the reasons behind the U.S. military presence in Colombia. In answer to questions from the press, Foreign Minister Fernandez reiterated that the GOC would not interfere in the affairs of other nations. Last week in Brazil, Bachelet had endorsed Lula da Silva's concerns with regard to U.S. military presence in Latin America and the idea of discussing the issue in the upcoming Unasur meeting. But yesterday Fernandez clarified what Bachelet had said: "Chile respects the sovereignty and national interest of every country in the hemisphere and that if there are countries that want to discuss these issues, we will do so in Unasur." Fernandez added that Unasur can only issue a statement if there is consensus among its members (Government-owned, La Nacion, 8/6).

¶6. A group of about 15 people gathered outside La Moneda to protest Uribe's visit. "Uribe out of Chile and of Latin America. No more Yankee military bases," said one banner (La Nacion, 8/6).

¶7. Editorial: "Chile and U.S. Military Presence in Colombia": "The Foreign Minister said that Chile 'respects the sovereign decisions of other countries.' Chile's diplomacy has therefore given Colombia, a regional partner, a justified support. In Brazil, President Bachelet had joined her host Lula da Silva in criticizing Colombia for agreeing to greater U.S. military presence.... taking Colombia by surprise. It seems that Bachelet wanted to make a gesture in favor of Brazil, which feels uncomfortable with greater U.S. military presence in a region where it hopes to exert leadership. Bachelet achieved her goal, but the collateral damage largely surpasses the benefits: Bachelet aligned Chile with Venezuela and Ecuador, countries that promote political and development models directly opposite to Chile's. Her remarks were also a direct censorship of the United States, with which Chile has built a solid alliance.... But the most significant damage was for Colombia, a country that has achieved substantial progress in its costly internal fight against the guerrilla and narcotics trafficking. This means that any issue related to security and cooperation with the United States is crucial.... The narco-guerrilla is a threat to the region's security and it should be in Chile's interest to neutralize their activities.... For these reasons, Chile's decision to correct its misstep is a good sign... and the Unasur Defense Council meeting next week is a good opportunity to confirm its new stance" (La Tercera, 8/6).

Local Politics-Venezuela

¶8. In a seminar on integration in Latin America, "Concertacion" presidential candidate Eduardo Frei criticized Hugo Chavez. Frei

said Chavez' "Bolivarian project" is based on a concept of "regional contagion and expansion," and his "political activism crosses the line and turns into an intervention in other country's internal affairs creating diplomatic and military tension." But Frei's criticism of ousted Honduran President Manuel Zelaya was most commented, because it aligned with the arguments presented by the *facto* Micheletti government. Reportedly, the Bachelet administration shares Frei's view, but only in private (*El Mercurio*, 8/6).

SIMONS